



Newsletter of the Arlington County Civic Federation
March 2022 | Volume 106 | Number 8

Please Note:

This revision of the newsletter includes the article and resolution from the Revenues and Expenditure Committee regarding the Tax Rate (see below).

April Membership Meeting April 12, 2022 @ 7:00PM

Delegates, Alternate Delegates, others associated with member organizations, and the public are invited to attend this virtual meeting.

Advance Registration is required and must be completed by 12 PM, Tuesday, April 11, 2022.

When: Apr 12, 2022 07:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZopduipqTstG9cRUBDvwxhXkmE3CL1F3Hq3>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

To expedite the check-in process please use your first and last name as your profile name this will help identify participants.

****The Secretary must be notified of voting member substitutions by 12 PM Monday, April 11th, 2022.**

If you are not familiar with Zoom, here is [a link to information and instructions on how to register and participate in CivFed's December 2021 Membership Meeting.](#)

April 12, 2022 Membership Meeting Agenda

- 7:00 - Regular Business, pledge, approve minutes
- 7:15 - Cultural Affairs Committee presentation
- 7:45 - TiGER Report
- 8:40 - Stormwater Utility Update
- 9:05 - Old Business: Vote on [R&E Tax Rate resolution](#)
- 9:20 - New Business
- 9:30 - Adjournment

President's Corner

This month, we have a presentation from the Task Force in Governance and Election Reform (TiGER), where they will present their recommendations on changes to the County's government and voting process. This represents the culmination of a long

process led by Chris Wimbush, and a number of volunteers to recommend reforms that will make the County and School Boards more effective, efficient and representative.

As a reminder, their mandate was to:

“... examine and potentially make recommendations on reforms which might include:

- 1) Structural reform through district representation and/or multi-member synchronous elections;
- 2) The size and/or remuneration of our county board and/or school boards;
- 3) Ranked choice voting for County Board and School Board general elections;
- 4) The future role of primaries and caucuses;
- 5) Options for alternative electoral mechanisms besides first-past-the-post and ranked choice.
- 6) Term Limits



Principals that will inform the Task Force’s work will include, but not be limited by the following:

- To improve the quality of our elected officials’ representation and policy making,
- To improve citizen engagement and voter turnout,
- To improve our Board’s ability to reflect the opinion and diversity of our communities
- To improve the quality and diversity (more choices--more voices) of our candidates and campaigns." From the [Board Resolution authorizing the Task Force](#).

We look forward to their recommendations, and to engaging with elected officials to implement these recommendations.

The Cultural Affairs Committee will be presenting at the April membership meeting, as will the Stormwater working group; see details elsewhere in this newsletter.

As you all know, we have conducted our meetings virtually for the last two years due to the pandemic.

I am pleased to report that the Hazel conference center is once again allowing outside groups to meet, and we are in discussions with them to determine the date of our first in-person meeting, potentially our May meeting.

Stay tuned for further communications on this topic.

Do note that regardless of when we return in-person, my intent is to continue with an online presence for those who do not wish to attend in person.

This will involve some planning to ensure engagement by both remote and in-person attendees during meetings; we will be working on that over the next month.

Please contact me with any questions or concerns as we go through this process.

There has been a lot of discussion regarding the County’s residential tax rate, and how it relates to the budget. The Revenues and Expenditures Committee are monitoring the situation and will report back to the membership as required.

I look forward to seeing you all on April 12 virtually, and in-person in the next months.

Warmly,

[Allan Gajadhar](#)

Cultural Affairs Committee

At the May Membership meeting, the committee will host an update from Plan Langston Boulevard (PLB). This has been multi-year planning process that began in 2016 that continues its’ efforts towards achieving completion.

Lately, there has been widespread concern in the artist community and by residents in and around the neighborhood over the future of the Lee Arts Center which is located within the PLB study area.

This planning effort impacts the entire Langston Boulevard corridor and as a result impacts many of our member associations. We look forward to hearing from PLB leadership on May 10.

On another topic, the Civic Federation was invited to participate in the Bozman Public Art Community Technical Advisory Panel (CTAP).

ACCF president, Allan Gajadhar approved Tina Worden, chair of the Cultural Affairs Committee to serve in this role. The panel will begin its' work later in April.

This is a wonderful and meaningful opportunity for the Civic Federation to represent our membership in the selection process of a significant public artwork that will sit at the heart of our government center.

The role is a preliminary step towards defining goals used to guide the artist selection for public artwork that will be suspended over the lobby of the Ellen M. Bozman Government Center during its' renovation. The integration of public art into our government center will allow for the celebration of civic space and civic life in Arlington.

The Community Technical Advisory Panel is comprised of County residents and staff who have been recommended by the County Managers Office. The CTAP will help define goals for the public artwork and review a visual preference survey. The CTAP will meet up to four (4) times over the next several months.

Invitation:

The Cultural Affairs Committee would like to invite one delegate member to pair up with Tina Worden for this panel.

If interested in learning more about this opportunity, please reach out to Tina directly by Thursday, April 14. Email: cultural.affairs.chair@civfed.org

Rising Residential Assessments/Tax Burden: Resolution and Report

By Suzanne Sundburg, POC, Revenues & Expenditures Committee (R&E)

- [Link to accompanying report:](#)
- [Link to current county staff vacancy list \(Attachment A\):](#)

With the fiscal year (FY) 2023 \$1.47 billion budget's approval imminent, R&E has examined assessments with an eye toward the real estate tax's regressiveness^[1] and residents' (owners' and renters'^[2]) growing tax burden.

Residential property owners have witnessed assessments soar along with home prices. In calendar year (CY) 2022, residential assessments have risen 5.8%, higher than the 5.6% and 4.3% increases in 2021 and 2020, respectively.^[3]

Apartments and hotels—both considered “commercial” properties—also saw property assessment increases overall in CY2022.^[4]

A double-edged sword, rising property values provide the county with a revenue windfall but likewise increase residents' tax bills. The average homeowner has seen his/her real estate tax bill rise from \$4,977 in CY2012 to \$7,726 in CY2021, now paying, on average, **\$2,361 more per year** in additional property taxes than were paid in 2012.^[5]

Even when the base real-estate tax rate remains constant—\$1.013 per \$100 of assessed value in 2021 and 2022^[6]—tax bills rise when assessments increase, which is called the “effective tax rate increase” (a \$0.023 increase in FY2023 for \$1.036/\$100).^[7]

The county can reduce the tax rate (called the “lowered rate,” a \$0.023 decrease for FY2023 to \$0.99/\$100) to offset rising assessments while still reaping revenue equal to or above the amount collected in the previous year (roughly \$30 million in additional

revenue even at the lowered rate).[8] State law[9] requires the *effective* and *lowered* rates to be advertised, but few taxpayers see the notice.[10] Likewise, the County Board typically focuses on the base or nominal tax rate in its guidance to the County Manager, if it mentions the tax rate at all.

Though many struggle with housing costs, one in 10 Arlingtonians is 65+[11] a group frequently vulnerable to cost hikes (including real estate taxes).[12] Low-income Arlington seniors are heavily concentrated in three ZIP codes—22202, 22203 and 22204—where the county tends to be more diverse.[13]

So how is the county using its 5.8% residential revenue windfall? Most of the 5.5% FY2023 budget increase appears to be earmarked for 115.5 new full-time-equivalent (FTE) county positions,[14] even though over 400 existing positions (10%+ of the county workforce) remain unfilled.[15] How surplus funds (left over when positions remain unfilled) are used is complicated and remains somewhat unclear. See R&E's [full report](#) for more details.

In its [Real Estate Assessment and Tax Burden Resolution](#), R&E urges County Board members to consider adjusting their annual budget guidance[16] to the County Manager so that it fully integrates the impact of the effective rate increase on residents and businesses earlier in the budget planning process so that the manager can better balance new spending with reasonable mitigation of the growing tax burden.

See footnotes at the end of the newsletter.

Public Services Committee: Stormwater Utility Update

Over the past 15 years, an escalation of heavy rainstorms has devastated Arlington homeowners and commercial interests, public infrastructure and private property, culminating in flooding in July 2019 and July 2020 and clearly exposing weaknesses and inadequacies in the county's stormwater mitigation infrastructure. County engineers and program managers have responded with a successful \$51 million bond issue in 2020; updated plans and proposals pursuant to the County's 2014 Stormwater Master Plan, and a nimble response to a stormwater crisis in the Westover area following the 2019 deluge.

The Civic Federation has encouraged such positive responses and urged greater ambition in seeking adequate funding to properly protect county residences and businesses. In several resolutions since 2019, ACCF has specifically supported the county's efforts to explore the feasibility of a stormwater utility, among many other recommendations. County response has generally been encouraging.

But County financial stormwater resources, traditionally funded by a targeted supplement to annual property tax bills, are insufficient and inequitably impose tax burdens on property taxpayers. As the result of a multi-year exploratory period, the County is moving to recommend that the County Board approve establishment of a stormwater utility to ensure a steadier stream of funding to support operation, maintenance and improvement of the County's aging and inadequate stormwater infrastructure.

The proposed utility would prospectively come online in FY 2024, and in establishing it, Arlington would bring its procedures into line with a widely accepted government model for funding stormwater remediation. A stormwater utility is presently in effect in Falls Church, Alexandria and in most major metropolitan areas in Virginia.

At its April membership meeting, the Public Services Committee and County staff will offer to ACCF members a summary overview of stormwater utility developments to date, as well as a timetable for implementation and a glimpse at how the tax burden of stormwater remediation would prospectively be redistributed.

This presentation will represent the start of a major county outreach over the next six months to better inform residents about a prospective stormwater utility. Our individual feedback will be actively solicited.

Task Force in Governance and Election Reform (TiGER)

ACCF's Task Force in Governance and Election Reform (TiGER) will present continues to its final report to the general membership to address the problem statements presented to the full membership during the November 2021 Monthly Meeting.

Nominations Committee

The 2022 ACCF Nominating Committee has met twice and elected Adam Henderson as Chair. We are pleased to invite Delegates and Alternates to the Federation to submit nominations for director and officer positions of ACCF for the upcoming fiscal year (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023) using the following link:

<https://forms.gle/XZWp6RwQNuHJVCgi6>

Elections will held at the General Meeting on Tuesday, June 14, 2022. The 2022 Nominating Committee is committed to a fair, open, and transparent nominations process.

Legislation Committee

Next Meeting: April 24, 2022

The next Legislation Committee planning and update meeting is scheduled for April 24th, 2022 at 2:00 pm to discuss upcoming programs and status updates on ongoing action items. Please contact Ron Haddox at ronhaddox@hushmail.com to receive a zoom invite for April's meeting.

Environmental Affairs

Spring 2022 Plenary Meeting – Taking Action for Trees Save the Date!

ACCF's THIRD PUBLIC COLLABORATIVE ON PRESERVING ARLINGTON'S TREE CANOPY
CO-HOSTED WITH THE NORTHERN VIRGINIA CONSERVATION TRUST

Background – Over the last sixteen months, the ACCF Collaborative on Preserving Arlington's Tree Canopy has engaged public, private and community stakeholders to address the status of our urban forest and develop recommendations on how to protect it in the future. The participants worked hard to develop options to create a healthy, vibrant, sustainable, and equitable urban forest. We don't want the Collaborative results to sit on the shelf. We want to move toward a new vision of what Arlington's Urban Forest can be. Climate change requires that we make bold moves now.

The Environmental Affairs Committee just received approval from the County to host their meeting at the Arlington Mill Recreation Center, 909 S Dinwiddie Street, Room 527 A & B, for May 7th from 10 am to 12:30, with an open networking lunch (Covid-sensitive) until 2 pm.

Purpose – To bring together individuals and organizations who recognize the important environmental, economic, and social benefits of trees and are committed to action to preserve the urban tree canopy as Arlington continues to develop. To build broad consensus on actions the County should take to preserve and expand our tree canopy, and how private parties can support this work.

Below is the agenda:

Draft Agenda –

- 10 – 10:10 Introductions and brief overview of the results of the previous public collaboratives
- 10:10 – 10:25 Presentation on the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust in Arlington – a vision for the future
- 10:25 – 10:35 The Importance of Trees for Climate Change & County Management
- 10:35 – 10: 50 The Nature of the Challenge: Shaping Market Forces
- 10:50 – 11:10 Announce top priorities identified for further action, narrow selection using immediate voting by participants, tally results
- 11:10 – 12:10 Breakout teams meet and start detailed planning, steps
- 12:10 – 12:30 Report results and how we'll coordinate in the future
- 12:30 – 1:30 Networking luncheon and informal discussions

If you would like more information or want to signup to participate, please contact Mary Glass at environmental.affairs.chair@civfed.org or Eric Ackerman at thurstonackerman@gmail.com

2021 ACCF Dues Information

On August 29, the Arlington Civic Federation Board of Directors approved the 2021 – 2022 budget which will be used to pay for administrative and web services for the organization.

Membership Dues for 2021 – 2022 are \$65 per member organization. Dues should be sent in as soon as possible, and are due by December 31, 2021.

Dues may be paid by check or by Zelle.

If paying by check:

- Send check to Arlington Civic Federation, PO Box 42091, Arlington Virginia, 22203.
- Please be sure to include the name of the organization on the check as a memo.
- Please send an updated list of delegates tosecretary@civfed.org.

If paying by Zelle, please email treasurer@civfed.org including the following information:

- Name of Organization
- Name of Payer
- Phone Number for Payer (for questions)
- Zelle ID (email address or phone number)
- The treasurer will then respond with the ACCF Zelle payment information.
- Please also email secretary@civfed.org with the updated list of delegates.

Thank you to the organizations that have submitted their dues payments.

If you have questions, please email treasurer@civfed.org for payment information and secretary@civfed.org for any other questions. Thank you!

Committee on Diversity, Equity, Belonging and Inclusion (DEBI)

If any member of the CivFed community would like to go over the diversity resolution feel free to contact chair of the DEBI (Diversity, Equity, Belonging and Inclusion) Alistair Watson. You can ask about any part of the resolution and its meaning.

Email: diversity.chair@civfed.org

2021-2022 Board of Directors

Officers

President, [Allan Gajadhar](#)
Vice President, [Nicole Merlene](#)
Secretary, [Alistair Watson](#)
Treasurer, [Stacy Meyer](#)

Board of Directors

Board Chair, [Nicole Merlene](#)
Board Vice-Chair, Mary Glass
Member at Large, [Mary Glass](#)
Member at Large, [Julia Tanner](#)
Member at Large, [Nadia Conyers](#)
Member at Large, [Mona Steffen](#)
Member at Large, [Eric Cassel](#)

Voting delegates and alternate delegates who are interested to serve on the Civic Federation's Board of Directors should contact [President Allan Gajadhar](#).

2021-2022 ACCF PUBLIC INTEREST COMMITTEES

Cultural Affairs – Chair [Tina Worden](#)
Diversity Committee – Chair [Alistair Watson](#)
Environmental Affairs – Chair [Mary Glass](#)
Housing – Chair [John Vihstadt](#)
Legislation – Chair [Ron Haddox](#)
Parks and Recreation – Chair TBD
Planning and Zoning – Chair [Ben Keeney](#)
Public Services – Chair [John Ford](#)
Revenues and Expenditures – [Suzanne Sundberg \(POC\)](#)
Schools – Chair [Todd Truitt](#)
Transportation – Co-chairs [Jerry Auten](#) and [Joe Pelton](#)

- Airport Noise Subcommittee – Chair [Joe Pelton](#)

2020-2021 ACCF SUPPORT COMMITTEES

Audit – Chair [Jay Wind](#)
Awards – TBD
Bylaws and Rules – Chair [Adam Henderson](#)
Banquet – TBD
Communications – Chair [Chris Wimbush](#)
Membership – Chair [Eric Cassel](#)
Nominations – TBD

Any Delegate, Alternate Delegate, or member of a Member Organization may participate on any Public Interest or Support Committee. Please contact the applicable Committee chair, point-of-contact, or [President Allan Gajadhar](#) if you are interested in participating on ACCF Committees.

LINKS TO MEETING DOCUMENTS

- [March Membership Meeting Minutes](#)
 - [Revised R&E Tax Rate Resolution](#)
-

[1] “Why Are Residential Property Tax Rates Regressive?": <https://www.philadelphiafed.org/consumer-finance/mortgage-markets/why-are-residential-property-tax-rates-regressive> and “Property tax burdens fall on nation’s lowest-income homeowners, study finds”: <https://news.uchicago.edu/story/property-tax-burdens-fall-nations-lowest-income-homeowners-study-finds>

[2] Apartment Search website, “Do Renters Pay Property Taxes?": <https://blog.apartmentsearch.com/city-living-2/do-renters-pay-property-taxes/> and ITEP “Who Pays?” (6th Edition) web page: <https://itep.org/whopays/>

[3] ARLnow, “JUST IN: County reports another jump in residential real estate assessments,” <https://www.arlnow.com/2022/01/14/just-in-county-reports-another-jump-in-residential-real-estate-assessments/>

[4] Arlington County Proposed FY2023 Budget, p. 60: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/budget/documents/fy-2023/fy-2023-proposed/fy-2023-proposed-budget-all-in-one-02.15.22.pdf>. “Hotel assessments increased 5.6 percent and apartment assessments increased 5.3 percent overall compared to CY 2021.”

[5] NOTE: “Single-family residence is based on all residential property including single family detached, semi-detached dwellings, condominiums, cooperatives, and townhouse residences.” See County Board Report 33A. (Posted 02-19-2021) request to advertise hearing for proposed tax rate for CY2021 (Attachment II) for the CY2012 average figure: https://arlington.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=3876&meta_id=201114.” See County Board Report 30A. (Posted 02-10-2022) request to advertise hearing for proposed tax rate for CY2022 (Attachment II): https://arlington.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&event_id=1743&meta_id=208669 for the CY2022 average figure.

[6] “PUBLIC NOTICE: March 31, 2022—Notice of Proposed Real Property Tax and Tax Rate Public Hearing”: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/VAARLINGTON/bulletins/30cbe37>. NOTE: The current base real estate tax rate of \$1.013/\$100 of assess value does NOT include the stormwater surcharge of \$0.017/\$100 of assessed value. With the stormwater surcharge included, the tax rate on all properties equals \$1.03/\$100 of assessed value. The current tax rate of \$1.013/\$100 of assessed value also does NOT include the commercial transportation tax surcharge of \$0.125 per \$100 of assessed commercial real estate value. For commercial properties, the tax rate (including both the stormwater and transportation surcharges) would be \$1.155/\$100 of assessed value. See also County Board Report 30A. (Posted 02-10-2022) request to advertise hearing for proposed tax rate for CY2022: https://arlington.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&event_id=1743&meta_id=208669.

[7] “PUBLIC NOTICE: March 31, 2022—Notice of Proposed Real Property Tax and Tax Rate Public Hearing”: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/VAARLINGTON/bulletins/30cbe37>. NOTE: An estimate of new revenue generated by the 2.3-cent effective tax rate increase is calculated by multiplying CY2021 total assessed value (\$83,049,154,800) by \$0.023 and dividing by \$100, or approximately \$19 million in added revenue.

[8] “PUBLIC NOTICE: March 31, 2022—Notice of Proposed Real Property Tax and Tax Rate Public Hearing”: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/VAARLINGTON/bulletins/30cbe37>. NOTE: CY2021 assessed value of \$83,049,154,800 x \$1.013 ÷ \$100 = \$819,833,710 in revenue at current rate. CY2022 assessed value of \$85,840,070,900 x \$0.990 ÷ \$100 = \$849,816,702 in revenue at the lowered rate.

[9] Code of Virginia §58.1-3321 “Effect on the rate when assessment results in tax increase; public hearings”: <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title58.1/chapter32/section58.1-3321/>

[10] “PUBLIC NOTICE: March 31, 2022—Notice of Proposed Real Property Tax and Tax Rate Public Hearing”: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/VAARLINGTON/bulletins/30cbe37>.

[11] CPHD Profile 2021: https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/arlington/documents/profile_2021.pdf

[12] “Property Taxes and Elderly Mobility”: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2811882/> and “Beyond Housing: Perceptions of Indirect Displacement, Displacement Risk, and Aging Precarity as Challenges to Aging in Place in Gentrifying Cities”: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6927009/> and “Get the Facts on Economic Security for Seniors”: <https://www.ncoa.org/article/get-the-facts-on-economic-security-for-seniors>

[13] People 65+ Living Below Poverty Level, ZIP code 22204, 2015–2019: <https://www.healthierarlington.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=343&periodId=4523&localeId=40717>

[14] Arlington County Proposed FY2023 Budget, p. 7 and p. 41: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/budget/documents/fy-2023/fy-2023-proposed/fy-2023-proposed-budget-all-in-one-02.15.22.pdf>

[15] See Attachment A: Response to R&E Committee’s FOIA request for a list of vacant Arlington County government positions. List as of 3-9-2022. NOTE: R&E has reduced the 478 vacant positions listed to “over 400” in order to account for part-time, seasonal and still-frozen positions that might skew its analysis.

[16] “Final Direction to the County Manager for Preparation of the FY 2023 Budget”: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/budget/documents/county-board-budget-guidance-for-fy-2023-101921.pdf>

Interested in being an Arlington County Civic Federation Delegate?

The Arlington County Civic Federation was founded in 1916. Today, it has 85 member organizations dedicated to advocacy and community involvement. The Federation membership reflects the broad array of interests and talents found in the County and is open and welcoming to all groups within Arlington, firmly believing that a broader range of groups creates better problem-solving outcomes for Arlington and its residents. Our purpose continues to be promoting the general welfare of Arlington County and its vicinity in a non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-sectional, and non-political manner.

Arlington County Civic Federation Delegates enjoy the full benefits of participation, voting, and serving in Civic Federation leadership positions. If your organization is a member of the Civic Federation, ask if it has open slots for delegates. If it is not a member organization of the Civic Federation, encourage it to join. Here is a [link](#) to our website for more details.

ACCF Calendar FY2022

April 2022

- NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Tuesday 29 March 2022, 6p
- GENERAL MEETING: Tuesday 12 April 2022, 7p, via Zoom
- BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: Sunday 24 April 2022, 4p, via Zoom

May 2022

- NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Tuesday 26 April 2022, 6p
- GENERAL MEETING: Tuesday 10 May 2022, 7p, via Zoom
- BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: Sunday 15 May 2022, 4p, via Zoom

June 2022

- NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Tuesday 31 May 2022, 6p
- GENERAL MEETING: Tuesday 14 June 2022, 7p, via Zoom
- BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING: Sunday 19 June 2022, 4p, via Zoom

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